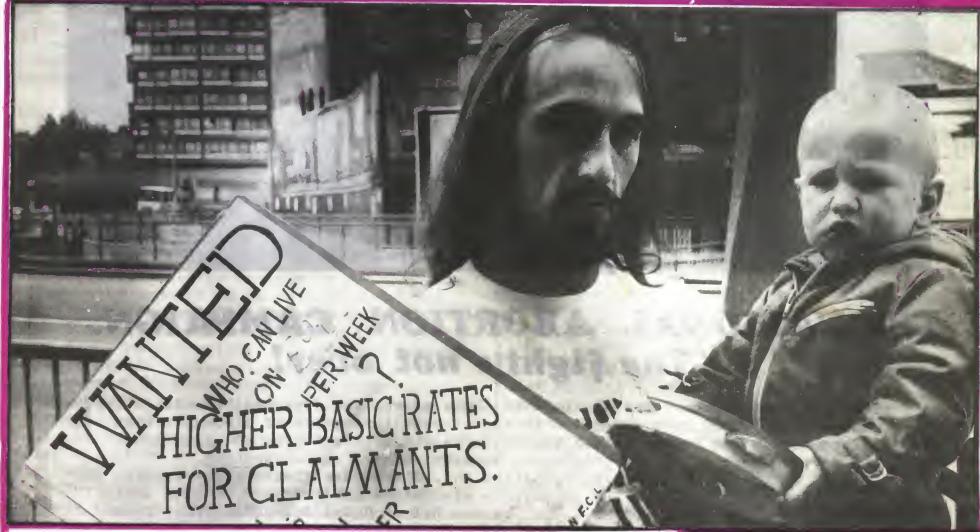


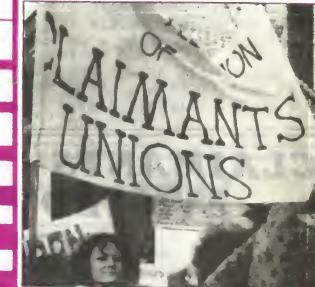
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CLAIMANTS NEWSPAPER NO 5



CAMPAIGN
ISSUE



they swim, we sink

Mother stole to feed her child, court told

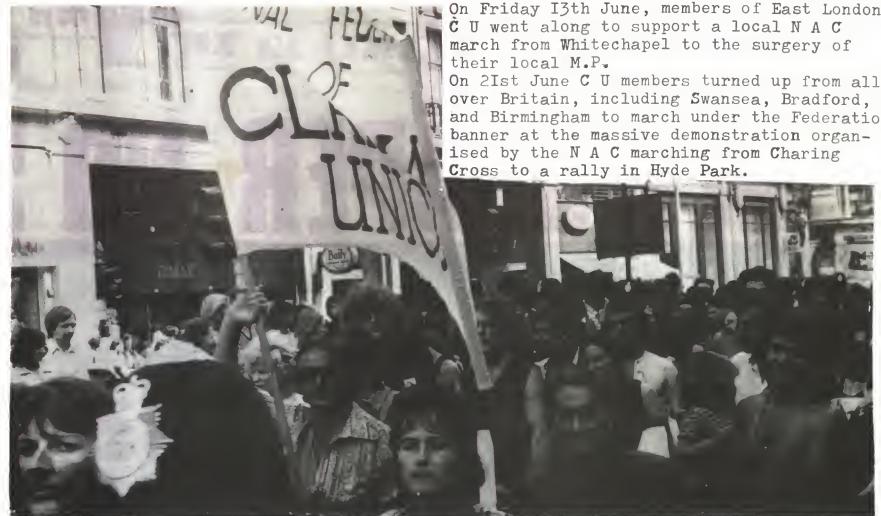
3 MILLION DOLE SCAP

A young divorcee turned to theft to feed her baby when her social security payments were stopped, were told yesterday.

DHSS

Mr. Robinson added: "Social security men say that they will make it up. She was really desperate. It is as an isolated incident when a £8 which did not cover rent, her solicitor said, to arrive. Then, for no apparent reason, her solicitor, from Shropshire, told her she had to leave. She

Mr. Robinson added: "Social security men say that they will make it up. She was really desperate. It is as an isolated incident when a £8 which did not cover rent, her solicitor said, to arrive. Then, for no apparent reason, her solicitor, from Shropshire, told her she had to leave. She



On Friday 13th June, members of East London C U went along to support a local N A C march from Whitechapel to the surgery of their local M.P. On 21st June C U members turned up from all over Britain, including Swansea, Bradford, and Birmingham to march under the Federation banner at the massive demonstration organised by the N A C marching from Charing Cross to a rally in Hyde Park.

The NATIONAL ABORTION CAMPAIGN. The fight's not over!

The high spot of the National Abortion Campaign was the June 21st Demonstration, when between 20 & 30,000 people came on to the streets in support of a Woman's Right to Choose. Even though the demonstration was so large and at least 150,000 signatures were obtained, we mustn't become complacent because we have gained nothing.

In 1967 we had a fairly liberal abortion Act. Since then almost every country in Europe has passed abortion laws far in advance of Britain and we now look like losing some of the ground we gained in 1967. The Commons Select Committee considering James White's Bill may well throw it out but only because it is unworkable in its present form. There is little doubt that another bill will be placed before Parliament in the next session and we must continue to fight this and every bill that does not give us free abortion on demand.

- WE NEED TO PLAN: 1) A national demonstration for November 1st as a national focus.
- 2) Local demos where possible in September & October.
- 3) A week of action with public meetings at the end of October.
- 4) Approaching the Labour movement through local factories.
- 5) Pickets of MPs and hospitals with a bad record on the issue.

WE CAN WIN on this issue if we mobilise the numbers and weight in the campaign which will affect MPs. Resolutions from important bodies are only of use to the extent to which they mobilise active support in pickets and demonstrations. We must not lose the initiative to SPUC, the abortion abolitionists. ACTION SPEAKS LOUDER THAN WORDS.

CLAIMANTS EVICTED FROM WALES

In Wales recently, the DHSS have made a number of attempts at pressurizing 'non-residents' on Social Security into leaving the area. Cardiff SS have been withholding benefits from several Irish families and offering them the fare home. This blackmail has in a few cases been fought & stopped by Cardiff C U who are referring two cases to the Race Relations Board. Further north in Dwyf, a woman from Leicester was told by the local Labour Exchange to return home despite her own pressing personal reasons for staying. Again the travel warrant was used as a carrot, with the refusal of benefits as the stick. Bangor C U have also reported moves by a local 'unemployment review officer' against non-resident claimants. Some have been threatened with 'deportation'

to areas where work is supposedly available. For obvious reasons, known cases of claimants being cut off have been few -most of them would leave rather than fight: more often the 4 weeks notice to find work or starve has made them sign off before the cut-off time was reached. The Four Week rule -as it is known- is meant to operate only in areas where work can easily be found and has anyway been discontinued elsewhere. Its (ab)use in the job-hungry area of Bangor brings back memories of the Thirties when the 'not genuinely seeking work' clause was used to cut off IOUs of thousands on the dole. In this way 30,000 claimants were starved into leaving South Wales so that they could be employed (more cheaply) in jobs in England. Though the dole queues aren't as large at present, they're growing larger and the State/Employers need to manipulate the Labour force for their own ends will increase. Workers in and out of jobs must coordinate their knowledge and strength to defend the right to work or sign on wherever they wish to, and not according to the dictates of government bureaucrats.

BREACH OF their ready-made silencer THE PEACE.

Southend CU Court Case

On January 31st this year, Mrs. Betty Davis, an active member of Southend CU was forcibly evicted from the SS and charged with breach of the peace (see C/N no 4 for details). 5 months and 3 adjournments later, she was found guilty and given a 12 month conditional discharge.

From the second adjournment on May 13th, all sorts of strange wheeler-dealing started. In our innocence we'd assumed it would be pretty straightforward apart from police verballs. But while the defence knew all the time what the prosecution's case was to be, this kept changing everyday as the prosecution learnt what the defence was going to throw back at them. The number of irrelevancies which came up was amazing - for example at one point we were told that the article in C/N no 4 was going to be brought up as an example of how Betty wanted to incite people to cause trouble at the SS. This was dropped when they realised that Betty hadn't written the article herself. Because of the number of witnesses Betty had who saw what happened inside the office, the prosecution's case was reduced to a couple of sentences reputedly said by Betty on the pavement outside, to the effect that she was going to force her way back into the SS office and cause as much trouble as possible.

The final hearing on June 10th lasted all the way through lunch (which might have had some bearing on their verdict!) Five prosecution witnesses were called, 3 cops & 2 SS officers, even though the case was now about what took place outside where the officials weren't to be seen. Betty's solicitor had by now got hold of a barrister who pulled the witnesses to pieces, especially regarding their judgement of time & distance. For the defence there was only one witness who had been outside with Betty on the pavement plus one character witness from the local Trades Council.

Summing up the defence emphasized how contradictory the prosecution's case was and

pointed out that the main police witness could remember Betty in the SS office six months before as clearly (as badly) as he could, this incident, a very subtle way of describing police persecution of one individual. He also said that never in his experience had someone been charged with threatening a building and that no one had said that Betty had actually tried to reenter the office, especially as she would have had to break down four locked doors. The defence were surprised at the verdict but the police were furious to hear that Betty wasn't to be bound over and therefore can go into the office as before.

what we learnt:

1) How not to be bound over: Betty insisted from the start that she would rather go to jail than be bound over, despite both the prosecution & defence asking her to agree so that the case could be heard. Since her refusal was obviously passed on by the Court Clerk to the Magistrates, they were put in the position of either turning a blind eye or sending a woman with 2 small kids to jail on a minor charge which would have meant bad publicity.

2) As many people as possible should stay with the person for as long as they can so they can't be charged with something that supposedly happened when they had no witnesses. Try to take notes of what's said yourself.

3) Insist that the defence calls up all your witnesses even if they think they've got the case sown up. Use good character witnesses and get plenty of support from local groups, trades councils and unions etc.

4) Don't let the prosecution put words into your mouth. Betty refused to answer yes or no to his questions. As she said, 'Your choice of words would not be mine: we think differently, we have different backgrounds & education and if I'm not allowed to use my own words there can't even be a pretence of justice in this court'.

5) Get any fines paid by someone else as a gesture of contempt for the verdict but don't refuse to pay, you'll get done.

Anti-Army street-theatre group arrested.

On Thursday July 24th, a street theatre group staged a play at the gates of the Manchester Show where the army had a recruitment caravan. The play attacked British imperialism and more important, the army that has served its needs. (Some of the play is in C/N no.2) Its premiere wasn't half completed before the police arrested the 6 actors out of the blue & charged them with Breach of the Peace. This unprovoked attempt to silence opposition to the army's recruiting propaganda seems prompted by at least 3 things; the presence of the army in fairly large numbers; the handing out of the famous 'discontented soldiers leaflet' (by people not connected with the play) and the Public Prosecutor's need to get further convictions under the notorious Incitement to Disaffection law. The six were kept inside until the following morning when they appeared in court to learn that the prosecution wished to detain them for a further 4 days in order to 'follow certain enquiries relating to further charges' including the incitement law just

TOOR-A-LOORA-LOORA-LOO,
THEY'RE LOOKING FOR MONKEYS UP IN
AND IF I HAD A FACE LIKE YOU, IN THE ZOO,
I'D JOIN THE BRITISH ARMY.

mentioned. The application was squashed and the group released on condition that they would not go near the park where the Show was still taking place. Meanwhile 4 others have been arrested at the same show but 2 have already been tried & given conditional discharges. The theatre group will have to wait until October to find out what crimes they've committed. The police & the courts will continue to intimidate groups campaigning for troop withdrawal from N.Ireland and giving information to soldiers and would-be recruits (most of whom are under 18 and on the dole). It is time for other Socialists & pacifists to join the protest against these attacks on the freedom of speech.



Jo Richardson's Private Members Bill on the Abolition of the Cohabitation Rule started last July; it originally included all women subjected to this 'law' but the Bill was amended to deal with widows alone. Much of the 'reason' for this was that only for widows is benefit a "statutory right" paid for out of their husband's insurance.

The Cohabitation Rule is a denial of an individual's right to an adequate income & is made on a discriminatory basis against women. This Rule forces them into a position of financial dependence on men with whom they form any kind of relationship. Claimants are the only section of society subjected to official snooping into their private lives & financially penalised for relationships with the opposite sex: the cases are based simply on **hearsay** evidence, anonymous letters and telephone calls -which would not stand up in a court of law. Yet in the many cases of alleged cohabitation that C.U.'s have been fighting, the allegations have been proved unfounded despite months of extreme stress and financial hardship.

Groups recognised by the State i.e. Ginger-Bread & C.P.A.G. were approached by the Supplementary Benefits Commission when reviewing the Cohabitation Rule while the Claimants Unions were ignored despite their first hand experience of its injustice. The report from the S.B.C to Barbara Castle is waiting for Parliament to hold a general debate on the cohabitation rule (but when?). Members of Southend and S.E. London C.U.s sent a very comprehensive report to Lord Collison of the S.B.C giving our views on why the cohabitation Rule should be abolished and setting out detailed examples of cases which have been fought & won. At the last conference in Swansea, it was suggested that letters should be written to the S.B.C, New Court, Carey Street, London W.C.I (especially by those who have successfully taken suspected cohabitation cases to appeal).

Jo Richardson's Bill was due to have a second reading on the 25th April and was third on the agenda; C.U. members got tickets from her to attend but the govt. left no time for it to be read - on a Friday no new Bills can be introduced after 4 p.m. for by that time one M.P. will shout 'I object' so he can get home early. So the Bill was postponed from Friday to Friday until Parliament closed at the end of July. Now the Bill will automatically fall and will have to be redrafted for the next Parliamentary Session. One consolation is that the Bill will be rewritten to include claimants on Social Security i.e. unsupported mothers and not just widows. Parliamentary whips object to the Bill on two grounds: they 'cannot' allow a Bill that would increase public expenditure and make a 'cohabitee' better off financially than married women, this despite the fact that wives can & do have rights of inheritance, maternity benefits, pension rights and tax relief etc.

At least three C.U. members have spoken to Jo Richardson who believes that if the Bill is passed even in its present form, it would be a stepping-stone towards the abolition of the sexual discrimination built into the Social Security system. At the last conference it was agreed that C.U.'s should write to their local M.P.'s asking them to support the Bill. Two questions should be put to them:

- 1) Ask them where they stand on it.
- 2) Ask them to support the Bill and put the arguments themselves by writing to Barbara Castle on the grounds that this Government Rule is unworkable and should be abolished.



Several women appeared in a London court, the other day, charged with defrauding the SS by 'cohabiting'. They were all separated wives who had kept on friendly terms with their husbands mainly because of the kids. Living in a large city the men had been unable or not wanted to find rented accommodation. They were often on the move but when things went wrong, they would sometimes return to their wives, often against their wishes. One woman summed it all up when she said, "O.K. so I am cohabiting with him but I never see him come in at night, he never pays me anything, not even for what he eats, he just dosses there."

Another woman named Cath had just moved into a new flat where the electricity supply had been retained in her husband's name. Then she was burgled and her husband as a potential suspect was asked by the police for his fingerprints. Since he didn't have a fixed address either, he gave hers - occasionally he slept there. So now he is being done with 'failure to maintain' while she has lost a good flat & has a fraud charge around her neck. All this in the name of the nuclear family.



It's Official!

The row between the Department of the Environment & the DHSS about the dangerous invalid three wheelers goes on. Apparently in the past, the DHSS has been able to persuade the D of E to exempt the "strike" from the basic road safety checks it has no chance of passing despite the deaths & injuries that have resulted. Now the D of E have resorted to making their bureaucratic frustrations public, through the media. To quote an official: "We recognise these vehicles are basically unstable & should be off the road. But it's like banging your head against a brick wall trying to tell that to the DHSS. They don't want to even know!" Steady on, lads, we all know the SS have a thankless task, protecting life and limb and the tax-payer's money.

SMEAR

About a month ago, the Daily Telegraph ran a fair article on Claimants Unions, some of it accurate. However 2 paragraphs taken together contained a nasty suggestion that CUs and the IRA might be connected in some way. The first paragraph dealt with the Irishmen who were denied SS benefits in Cardiff (see page 2). Following this seemingly harmless piece of information came a mysterious statement from an unidentified (to us) "CU spokesman": "It is ridiculous to suggest that we have any connection with the Birmingham bombings". Whoever said we had?

Probe into 'dole men drunk' row

Strike hits dole queue

By MICHAEL McCARTHY

A claim that dole officials were drunk while on duty is to be investigated today by the Department of Health & Social Security. Police were called when 20 claimants staged a demo at an emergency payments centre in South London on Saturday. The demonstrators said that 3 officials came back from lunch drunk & refused to pay out any more cash, telling everyone to leave.

DOLE SAVES A WITCH

A £30 fine imposed on self-confessed witch Karolyn (-) for stealing church items was quashed yesterday- because she is on the dole. Judge Desmond Vowden, QC, said at Bristol Crown Court: "If people on the dole can pay a fine, they are getting too much. If they can't, they are not getting enough".

Express terrorist-claimant nightmare

The DHSS, with vocal support from the Ministry of Propaganda, c/o the Daily Express, have been fighting the growth of a new insidious breed of claimant, the IRA sympathiser who apparently is robbing the state of "as much as £6000 a day" and is spending it on arms & ammunition and high living". Though the Express "produced no hard facts to justify its headline, that IRA terrorists have swindled £10 millions out of the Social Security scheme", it could be that their relentless campaign has actually been directed at the minority Catholic population in Ulster, robbed of decent jobs & housing, and full civil rights - the sorts of things the press never mention.

Lord Denning Rules?

From the *Guardian* newspaper: "the judge ruled as follows, "it is plain that Parliament intended that the Supplementary Benefits Act should be administered with as little technicality as possible...the courts should hesitate before interfering with the decisions of the appeal tribunals. Otherwise the courts would be engulfed with streams of cases just as they were under the old Workmen's Compensation Act". The SS kangaroo Courts become answerable to the law, perish the thought!

Mr. Big

If you've been reading the *Observer* or the *Sunday Express* recently, you might have seen a certain Joe Kenyon mentioned. "Uncle Joe", he's called, has been posing at various times as founder, president & treasurer of the CU movement. He is none of these things - they don't exist anyway- nor is he still a member of any active Claimants Union. As far as the N.F.C.U. is concerned, he is just a figment of Fleet Street's distorted imagination.

Ex-snooper's shock-horror probe

SOME claimants' unions "are nothing less than small Marxist cells out to disrupt, discredit and to destroy not only the social security system but society itself and I have heard some of their members boasting of various successes."

This startling statement was made by Mr Robin Page, author of "The Benefits Racket," and a former civil servant, in a paper given to the Royal Society of Health Congress at Eastbourne.

Mr. Page's diatribe of indignation very much follows the thinking of Keith Joseph, the Tory priest of doom, studded as it is with such well worn phrases as "unwanted children", "common-place promiscuity", "ignorance and irresponsibility" and "inbred delinquency". Such words conveniently hide the real economic necessity that poverty is. The cat was really let out of the bag when Mr. Page went on to condemn wage demands in general, and S.S. payments to strikers in particular, comparing them "to making a present of a razor blade to a person intent on suicide". His startling conclusion, that "some people were getting more than their money's worth from Social Security" was obviously intended to bring snorts of disgust from his distinguished audience of poverty industry parasites.

Defend our right to squat!

Recently there has been a barrage of anti-squatting stories in the press -mostly scare stories about people going away on holiday and returning to find their homes taken over with no legal way to get them back. Many of these stories are not based on fact and are a deliberate attempt to blacken squatting in people's minds so that the government can outlaw it completely without anyone daring to object.

As most people are aware by now, a body called Law Commission has been drafting new measures 'to make it harder for squatters to move into empty houses & refuse to leave.' These are the infamous Criminal Trespass Law proposals designed to put a 6 month prison sentence for a new offence which would include any attempt to stay on any premises where the owner or management had asked you to leave. So being in the SS & demanding your rights could mean breaking the law, or workers occupying their plant in support of a wage claim, or a homeless family squatting an empty house, or an old lady demanding her right change- all could be done for criminal trespass if they refused to leave when asked.

It's no accident that the government is bringing it forward now- at a time when more & more people are fighting them on claiming, housing and work issues. They aim to cow us into submission with new laws. But the Law Commission report won't be out till the end of the year, clearly too late for the government & councils who are doing their nut over the success of squatting and other grass roots movements against them & their corruption. Hence the big propaganda campaign. Hence over 100 MPs signing a Commons motion calling on the government to

outlaw squatting straightaway. Not one of them has been homeless and they've just got a pay rise that is more than most unsupported mothers get a week.

Meanwhile the old laws, never too clear at the best of times, are being juggled about with. On July 16th Justice Oliver ordered squatters out of a London flat despite the admitted fact that the owners had not taken all reasonable steps to identify the squatters, as the law had previously required them to do. Under another court rule, he exercised his discretion like the SS, and granted the possession order. On July 17th, Lord Widgery reversed the established procedures for eviction by ruling that even if the identities of the squatters were not known, eviction could still go ahead. This related to a squat in Wandsworth where squatters have kept ahead of the Local Authority by exchanging houses. The same week a judge ruled that despite the Local Authority having agreed to electricity reconnection for squatters in Colchester & thereby tacitly agreeing to their being in the houses, the squatters could still be evicted. Finally in Bristol the electricity and gas boards to appeal level over whether they have a statutory duty to supply mains services to anyone in actual occupation of premises. It seems they may be able to wriggle out of their duty to supply everyone (if the bill is paid up) and avoid having to supply squatters. If this ruling is upheld, it could smash squatting.

So all in all, we're really up against it- a campaign must be mounted to fight against their attempts to smash the right to squat & to occupy so-called private property in defence of our rights.

Worker's Control of S. S. appeals.

South Shields Claimants Union is calling for direct worker control of the Social Security system with immediate action to achieve a workers majority on local appeals tribunals. Recent industrial action by workers on Tyneside has exposed increasing collaboration by SS officials and management against workers, and their unions. Decisions taken by the DHSS and the Dept. of Employment during strikes, accept without question management allegations about the nature of the dispute and arbitrarily reject worker's claims. Consequently workers & their families are denied unemployment and/or supplementary benefit regardless of the justice of their action.

The discretionary powers of the DHSS are being operated against workers interests and the legal statutes of the D of E, already biased in favour of the employer, are being extended by a powerful body of case law. Thus workers locked out by their firm are refused SS while striker's wives with kids to keep, are allowed the non-householder's reduced rate. Sick miners were refused sickness benefit when their mates were out on strike, and single miners were refused emergency Section 13 payments. Workers at Swan-Hunters were conned into sacrificing their holiday pay during a strike while apprentices locked out by management, in breach of written agreement, were refused all benefits. With the prospect of nationalisation of the shipyards & other

industries, DHSS decisions will become increasingly important. The State would then become both the work paymaster and arbiter of SS rights. The current collaboration between management and SS officers would become a unified action against workers by a corporate state machine.

Taking SS decisions to appeals tribunals is the only 'legal' way open strikers who are denied benefits. Two out of the three members who sit on them are of middle class/management background. In the case of the National Insurance tribunals, the chairmen are from the legal profession. In both cases the tribunals have a built-in bias against workers -particularly those involved in industrial actions. This bias is evident from the decisions of the tribunals which rarely support workers engaged in industrial actions. The chairman always displays an abysmal ignorance of working-class life. The chairman of N. Tyneside SS tribunal recently argued for the refusal of benefits for an elderly worker to replace worn-out boots on the grounds that as he had had a stroke since making the appeal, 'he won't be doing much walking'. Another chairman ruled that 'electric light is not an essential family item'.

The South Shields Trades Council has expressed support for worker/claimant control of the SS and is to convene a conference of local trade unionists on the issue. The North East Confederation of Trades Councils is to call a conference of worker representatives on local tribunals to discuss the possibility of coordinating action by these representatives throughout the North East.

THE VISITING OFFICER AND THE SINGLE FATHER

A STUDY IN TYRANNY AND RESISTANCE.

Below are some extracts from a tape-recorded confrontation between an SS visitor and a single father one Monday morning in May this year. Pete the father had been left with his baby last Xmas while he was unemployed; with the help of Southend C U, he managed to get himself an order book. Then, Pete applied for a clothing grant and a visit was made in the presence of Allen, a C U member, apparently to assess his clothing needs. Or was it?

Visiting Officer: What are you doing about getting the baby looked after so you can get out to work?
 Pete: Now look there's an Act in the book which says I can look after my baby.

V O: Yes, but there's no Act in the book which says you're supposed to stop at home all day to do it.

You're supposed to make arrangements for the baby to be looked after so you can go to work.

Pete: Oh no, I'm not...

V O: And if you don't do it...then the baby will have to be taken into care of the local Authority.

...get in touch with the local authorities and tell them that the baby needs to be looked after because

Pete: Why?

V O: Because we're not prepared to keep you until he's sixteen.

no baby

Having been told that the SS office manager had agreed that Pete "was not available for work", the V O then began to doubt that the baby existed merely because Pete's sister had taken him out for a walk at the time. This was a tactic the V O used again with reference to the claim for clothing.

V O: You've put a lot of items down.

Pete: Which things?

V O: Well I can't see him, can I? I don't know what the baby's got.

no mac

Having found out that Pete had very few clothes himself, he picks on the fact that Pete's without a raincoat.

V O: Well you must have had a raincoat or coat sometime in your life and you don't wear them out...

Pete: Well I had this jacket but that...

V O: Well I haven't had a new coat and I've been doing

ENJOY IN THE PRIVACY OF YOUR OWN HOMES
IN FABULOUS GREY AND BLACK
WITH RED TAPE.

THE VISITORS

starring
DIRTY MAC
S.S. FILE

WITH
IVOR GRUDGE
EVA SHARP
AND A
SUPPORTING
CAST OF
MILLIONS!

COMING
TO YOUR
DOORS
SHORTLY
DON'T
MISS
THEM!

PRICE OF
ADMISSION:
YOUR LIFE

this work for 14 years & I've still got one on my back

Pete: Well I've never had a raincoat specially for rain.

V O: Well you don't need one, do you, if you've never had one....

a lie

After more arguments, Allen pops the big question. The point is, will you let him have them, or not? He got them out.

V O: No not here, not to show me. I have'nt seen the baby.

Allen: that's not the end of it anyhow, because we're not going to stand you coming round here & saying he's not fit to look after the baby & ought to go to work.

V O: I'm not saying that at all.

Allen: Well you did say that, and we're not going to leave it at that either.

personal?

The V O, not content with repeating one argument over and over, does the same with his other.

V O: I still think he ought to look for employment.

Allen: Well if he signs on, what happens if he signs on?

V O: If he signs on, we should look after the child or the Local Authorities should take it into care.

Pete: Why?

V O: It's their job, is'nt it? Local Authorities look after children...I said that he has not shown himself capable of maintaining that baby, like he probably

didn't maintain his wife & that's whv she left...

Allen: ...Leave it at that, Pete, and we'll go down and get the others and go down and we'll do something about it

TAPE-RECORD THEIR THREATS!

The tape was played in front of the local SS manager who sent out a written apology to Pete. Leaving the slander aside, the interview & what precedes it shows very clearly the pressures the SS can bring to bear on the single father. Last year as a result of the Finer Committee report, the DHSS have acknowledged that single fathers do not have to register for employment. But obviously in practice the sexist principle that only women should bring up kids while men go out to work, still operates throughout the SS system. At an appeal (which he won), following his claim for a clothing grant, Pete was asked what he was going to do when his kid was 16: "Labouring," he said, "like I'm doing now!".

SCHOOL-LEAVERS WITHOUT WORK-UNITE!

Unemployment is now over a million and school-leavers are having a hard time of it all over the country. The sob-stories put out by the media of young people on the dole deprived of 'the chance to work' (as though work whatever it was was all a school-leaver could ask for) ignore many of the harsh realities of 'youth unemployment': being forced into lowpaid jobs under threat of having your benefit stopped; being forced to choose between rotting on a council estate and the false promise of escape into the British war-machine- the army; being forced by the DHSS back to parents & teachers who want nothing to do with you. School-leavers must organise around such issues as social security to resist these pressures.



This brief guide for unemployed school-leavers was put out 2 months ago by South Tyneside Claimants Union. It is not comprehensive, rather it's meant to clear away a few of the myths. Winning your full entitlements is one fifth knowledge and four fifths persistence.



Unemployment Benefit (UB)

How to qualify. If you have worked since leaving school, and have at least 26 Class I stamps (i.e. National Insurance for employed people) and are available for work, then you can claim Unemployment Benefit (U B). For students this would mean during the holidays or at the end of course. U B would be paid at a reduced rate unless you have paid or been credited with at least 50 stamps in the last contribution year, 39 of which must be Class I.

Students under 18 are credited with Class 3 stamps (for non-employed people). Those over 18, while classed as non-employed aren't credited this way.

They can pay for Class 3 stamps themselves but usually there's nothing to be gained, unless they have worked full time for more than 26 weeks. To be sure, you should obtain further advice.

Sickness Benefit. This is available on the same basis as U B except that Class 2 stamps (for the self-employed count the same as Class I. The rates of benefit are shown in the centre pages.

Short College Courses. It is possible to claim U B while on a short college course provided you make a clear statement to them that you are prepared to give up the course once they find you a suitable job. Under the Training Opportunities Scheme, some courses can qualify you for a training Allowance on top of your U B though it has to be 3 years since you left full-time education.

Supplementary Benefit (SB)

This is available as of right to every person over 16 who has left school, is unemployed and is registered for work. Registering for work doesn't mean that they will offer you a suitable job straight-away or that you have to accept any low-paid dirty work no one else will take. They can't force you though they will try. If you take a job you don't like, leave it. (See Claimants Newspaper no. 3)

Full-time students do not qualify for S B during term time. They can get it during the holidays and in the interval between school and college i.e. when they are available for work. Part-time students (i.e. students attending college up to 3 days a week or 6 half days or the equivalent) can claim benefits during term-time as well as holidays. As on the dole (U B), you must say

that you will give up the course if suitable work is found. School-leavers, 16 years old or over, are entitled to S B immediately. If you say you intend to return to the 6th form, benefits might be refused. This is not the law- simply a self-made DHSS rule. If you leave school to get a job, then you can draw benefits and then decide to go back to the 6th form if you don't find suitable work. If you leave 6th form you can claim S B anyway.

Early leavers. The 1966 Social Security Act states that S B is available to those available for work; nevertheless if you leave school immediately after your exams, you will probably be refused benefits until the official end of term- another example of self-made DHSS law. Like all the others, they are there to be fought through appeals. Join your local Claimants Union....

Signing on.

When you register as unemployed at the Labour Exchange, make sure they give you a B I form to take down to your local Social Security Office, whether or not they give you a job to go for. You can't get S B or U B initially without one. If you have no insurance cards, they can & should issue you with a temporary set. They might ask you to visit the Careers office first.

At the DHSS office, a clerk will take down a few details on a form and ask you to sign it. Read it before you do. You will then probably be told that



SCHOOL-LEAVERS cont.

you will be sent a Post Office giro. You should get it within 3 days. If not, ring up, and complain. It's amazing how many claims get "mislaid". You might be told a visiting officer will call; make sure there is someone at the address to confirm your story.

Getting your rights from the SS is not just a matter of knowing them. You must also be prepared to fight for them, through the web of time-wasting procedures, false information and moral blackmail that they often weave. Don't be put off. Remember these benefits are yours as of right, not out of charity. Remember also that the DHSS make up their own rules, which are'n't the law and can be challenged by making an appeal. If you're dissatisfied with your benefits, demand a written assessment of your claim (form a124). If you're still dissatisfied with your money, demand an appeal form. Your local Claimants Union will help you with it. If there is none in your area, form one with your friends. Never meet the DHSS alone, always take along a friend.

Misellonios

NHS Frame-Up

Claimants who wear glasses are finding that opticians operating the NHS scheme are not providing the full range of National Health frames, thereby forcing claimants to pay for frames they would normally be able to obtain free through the DHSS. In some cases, only one type of frame has been offered and claimants' requests for alternative frames have been met with refusals and astonishment that anyone 'living off the State' should be cheeky enough to demand a choice. Claimants Unions should campaign for an end to this form of discrimination. If the optician in question cannot provide a satisfactory choice, then the DHSS should be made to pay most of the cost towards a set of 'private' frames.



Keith Joseph, patron saint of all claimants, denied that the recent 1 million unemployed figure was accurate. The real figure was, he thought more like half as much. The rest, all 500,000 of them, are voluntary malingerers.

Invalidity pensions

Last month the Lords voted to remove a clause from the new SS Pensions Bill which said that people on invalidity pensions should lose all their benefit if they earned more than £7 a week. The defeated clause had come from the Labour government.

Southend

Paranoid 'counterstaff' at Southend SS are threatening to strike if kids are brought into the office. Southend C U wrote to the CPSA branch secretary asking for a meeting but he hasn't replied. Southend goes on: "However, a little bird has told us that they have discussed it and don't want to meet us because we're 'all communists'?" because they disagree violently with the Charter, but mainly because they don't want to meet any of us on a personal level (just in case they like us?) Our latest move has been to write to Balham CPSA requesting a local meeting and saying that C U members are being so discriminated against on a personal claiming level that we'll soon have grounds for an Order of Mandamus. That should give the local staff something to get really paranoid about!"



Pissed off

Instead of taking his usual place at the back of the long signing-on queue, an unemployed man leapt over the counter at Preston Exchange recently and made a dash for the filing room upstairs. Before the staff could catch him, he managed to urinate in one of the filing cabinets and make his getaway. Something to do with the lack of public conveniences!

No mug

A woman after she had been mugged in Manchester recently, tried to make an emergency claim under section 13. She was turned down without even being granted an interview. Finally she was loaned a few quid from the local Family Advice Centre. At her appeal she not only won on principle but she got her money as well. In accepting a loan from the Family Advice Centre she had "incurred a debt to a voluntary agency" which therefore, to be repaid. Had it been the C U, the tribunal would have conceded the principle but refused the money on the basis that the need for it was over.

Comput-a-claim

A new image of the computerized claimant is being promoted by the DHSS, it was announced a few weeks ago. Any breakdowns in communication will be rapidly dealt with by the Post Office and crossed wires & loose ends will be untangled by standby technical teams based at Reading. According to an official, faults in the SS system arise mostly out of mal-adjusted input: 'erasing the memory banks seems the best remedy'.

The N.U.W.M.'s long and bitter struggle.

In this first of two parts, we trace the beginning of the National Unemployed Workers Movement's political struggle against Ramsay Macdonald's ill-fated national government.

In June 1929, Labour was elected into office by a small margin of 27 seats. Though they lacked an overall majority in Parliament, their election pledge had been to push through 'socialist reforms' especially for the unemployed, at all costs. But, as is well known, wearing top hats at Buckingham Palace proved too much for them and as the economy continued to sink, the Labour government's wholesale betrayal of their mainly working-class supporters began. And as ever, the growing numbers of unemployed were worst hit.

UNEMPLOYMENT FIGURES.	
JUNE 1929.....	1,160,000
MAY 1930.....	1,700,000
JANUARY 1931.....	2,640,000

(let alone to listen to it), the Labour Minister - a Mr. Thomas - totally ignored the delegation. The 15 members marched to the conference room where they sat demanding to see the minister who instead ordered their forcible eviction from the building.

As a part concession, the government announced the same day, new 'additional machinery' for appeals against the work clause but a boycott of the new appeal procedure was soon brought into effect. It was this tactic by the N U W M that worked for soon after, the automatic disqualification of the claimant was abolished and the burden of proof as to whether the claimant had not been seeking work was put on the Insurance officers.

By this time, the N U W M was already strong with branches in most cities & towns; most of their major demands were concerned with work and unemployment benefit. Apart from campaigning for higher benefit rates, much of the N U W M's activity centred around two demands: work only to be accepted at Trade Union rates and the removal of the "not genuinely seeking work" clause by which claimants were cut off for not being able to prove that they had been out everyday looking for a job. In the year before the 1929 election, 285,000 claims had been cut off in this way. In the 8 months after it, this amount was actually exceeded. In late 1929 the N U W M mounted a national campaign for the abolition of the disqualifying clause, culminating in a delegation to the Ministry of Labour. Following the Tories' refusal to recognise the N U W M's existence,

On two other issues, however, the N U W M and their allies in the Local Authorities were defeated. One concerned the system of 'Test and Task' work which had been imposed on many 'able-bodied' claimants on relief under threat of having their relief money stopped, by the local Poor Law administrators. This cheap-labour scheme often amounted to 30 hours work a week without payment but under N U W M pressure had been discontinued in some areas. The new Labour Minister of Health saw things differently and through his powers of money control, was able to blackmail Local Authorities into reintroducing the scheme everywhere. The same powers enabled him to enforce repayment of relief debts incurred by miners during the 1926 lockout, after many Local Authorities had thought it only fair to wipe off the amounts owing to them because of the starvation wages paid in the mines after 1926. By Xmas 1929 Labour's facade of 'social concern' wasn't just wearing thin, it had cracked right open.

letter from the works

The fifth issue of the Newspaper is here, by the skin of its teeth and 2 months late. Most of the contents could have come out on time but for the work involved, and the fact that so few people are actually involved in producing it. Had the paper been on schedule, everyone would have assumed that everything was fine and that the small group of individuals that produce it would go on doing it without need of any help. Which is an illusion. And not the way a socialist paper should be run anyway.

Things are getting better, certainly. The paper's no longer just produced in Manchester. Work on the current issue was shared between us Newton & Saltley CUs but really that was only because we didn't go to the Swansea conference. If we had the sharing scheme wouldn't have happened. So if people in the CU movement do reckon that the paper's worth having and keeping, we must agree on a new basis by which more people can participate in what should be a paper by claimants for claimants.

On the right, are some proposals in brief that we would like to be discussed at the coming conference. We hope people are willing to participate in the discussion (and therefore the production, at whatever stage). Unless they are, we'll just be talking to ourselves and it will be the same old story - you start it, you finish it.

CONTENT. Most of the contents of a future issue should be arranged, where possible, at conference -s where full discussion can take place. Where it's not possible, through the regional structure. PEOPLE MUST KNOW THAT AS CLAIMANTS THEY HAVE THE RIGHT TO PUT ANYTHING IN THE PAPER (as long as it's related in some way to being a claimant). But that also means certain obligations like, at least being able to write it up in time

PRODUCTION. Work on the paper must be shared between different CUs for the work is within the capabilities of anyone involved with CUs who can read & write. Expenses incurred should be met out of the Newspaper fund, it can afford it. Conferences should find at least one CU apart from ourselves willing to share the work. Much will depend on what theme is to be featured and on who knows what about it.

COMMUNICATING & EDITING MATERIAL. The responsibility for collecting material cannot be left to any one person or CU; rather every CU who is coordinating activity in a certain area should encourage people to write in that area, especially those who cannot make conferences. The monthly coordinating meetings are the best occasion for editing material already written up and discussing future material, between conferences, that is. Finally the idea that if you're not doing something, you should criticize it should be replaced by criticism and involvement.

LETTERS

Take me to your leader.

Dear Colleagues,

We are City Centre Claimants but not a Claimants Union. We work with a Community Lawyer. We believe as she does, that we must use the Law to expose the Poor Law which is still with us—that means taking 'false statement' cases to Crown Court & refusing to be tried by the Magistrate Courts which are Poor Law Courts. Using Section 3 of the Social Security Act 1966 to base cases on negligence. We also wish to collect as much information as possible about the treatment of claimants in order to take the case of the monstrous Poor Law to the U.N. Commission on Human Rights.

....The ordinary legal profession are of no use to us. We are not desirous of playing the SS dirty games at their own tribunals nor in their own court....

We want an end to unemployment & a decent income based on the exorbitant rates of contributions & taxes paid whilst working for the other groups of claimants....We are not interested in sordid confrontations with the local DHSS offices, we will not win that way. We do not find it necessary to have regular meetings. We know when the Community Lawyer is fighting a case. Will you help us with our appeal to the United Nations!

Liverpool City Centre Claimants.

Ms Castle speaks.

Below is a letter from Barbara Castle who is the DHSS chief. We wouldn't have printed it but for the fact that no letters were written to the paper. So if you don't want YOUR paper filled with official replies & denials, please pull your fingers out and write something WORTH reading!

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SECURITY

Alexander Fleming House, Elephant & Castle, London SE1 6BY

Telephone 01-407 5522

From the Secretary of State for Social Services

Dear Ms Twelve,

(Southend C U member)

Thank you for the petition which you handed to my officials when you met at Alexander Fleming House on 8 July. I am glad you had the opportunity to talk with them, and hope you found it a useful discussion.

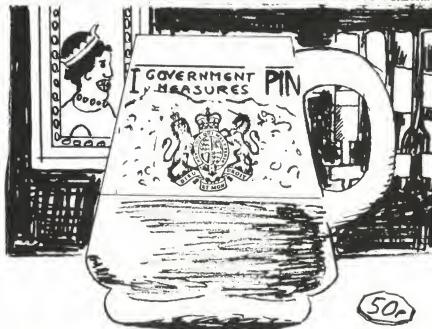
My letter of 7 July did fully cover the points raised in the petition, but my officials tell me you had a further request to make: you wished to have an interview with members of the Supplementary Benefits Commission. I am sorry that this will not be possible, but if you have any further queries, either general questions of policy or any doubts as to particular decisions, please do not hesitate to write to me or to the Chairman of the Commission.

Sincerely
Barbara Castle
(Labour party ruler)

VIVE LA FETE!

For the second year running, the NFCU ran a stall at the Whitsun Lutte Ouvrière festival at Meriel near Paris. Members from Manchester, Brun and London CUs made the channel crossing along with people from I.S., Workers Fight and Manchester Free School. On the stall we had the various handbooks & newspapers for sale as well as a bilingual pamphlet explaining what the CU is about—there is no equivalent in France or other EEC country (See C/N no.2)

We had many interesting discussions both on the stalls & in the forums. Altogether 250 stalls of various types. The socialist organisation, Lutte Ouvrière obviously predominated but any other French or foreign left-wing group were allowed to run stalls. The entertainments



THE GREAT LABOUR WAY OF LIFE NO. 1. YOUR CHEAP LOCAL FROTH

were not of the usual fairground variety: throwing bricks at cardboard policemen, shooting right-wing politicians, passing a ring along a wire bent in the shape of Giscard's head—either you win or electrocute the president! Films, theatre & music were put on with bands playing throughout Sunday night. Young children were provided for in a daytime creche & playground. There were numerous food & drink stalls at relatively cheap prices and free camping was available in a nearby forest.

The event lasted the 5 days of the French Whit holiday. There is really no equivalent to it over here—the Windsor festivals have lacked the political emphasis & organisation of the Lutte Ouvrière fete; conferences & exhibitions usually lack the lighter side, and the Claimants Camp, well, that's something different altogether!



THE CLAIMANTS MOVEMENT

Claimants Unions are groups of people on Social Security who have got together to help each other and to fight collectively around the four demands known as the

CLAIMANTS CHARTER

1. The right to an adequate income without means test, for all people.
2. A socialist society in which all necessities are provided free and which is managed and controlled directly by the people.
3. No secrets and the right to full information
4. No distinction between the so-called deserving and undeserving.

CU Activity

There are three aspects to Claimants Union work:

1. Fighting claims at labour exchanges, Social Security offices, Appeal Tribunals and sometimes through the courts.
2. Political - producing literature such as the newspaper and Handbooks, also leaflets etc., organizing demonstrations and special conferences, schools etc.
3. Social - most CU members get a lot of support through the organization of play-groups, food co-ops, squatting, trips and outings, the summer camp etc.

Each Claimants Union is self-governing and cannot be mandated outside the Charter. The essence of Claimants Unions is rank and file control, which means that members make their own decisions at a local level at the weekly meetings of their Union. Consequently, Claimants Unions are not branches of a national organization and they differ in character and tactics. In doing so they reflect their individual localities, their particular communities and the personalities of their members.

REGIONAL

NORTH THAMES

East London CU, Dame Collet House, Ben Jonson Road, London E.I. 01 790 3867 & 4672

LONDON SOUTH

Battersea & Wandsworth CU, 172, Lavender Hill, London S.W.11. 01 228 7877

WALES

Swansea CU, 18 Windsor St, Swansea.

NORTH WEST

Manchester CU, Mosside People's Centre, St Mary's, Moss Lane East, Manchester M5.

YORKS & HUMBERSIDE

Buttershaw CU, 2 Strensall Green, Collingham Avenue, Buttershaw, Bradford. 675352 & 674812

NORTHERN IRELAND

Derry CU, 87 Bishop St, 0504 65703

MIDLANDS

Newtown CU, 19 Carlyle Rd, Birmingham M6. 021 455 0566

SOUTH WEST

Bristol CU, 54 Richmond Rd, Bristol 6. 0272 422310

SCOTLAND

Edinburgh CU, 20 Stanley Rd, Edinburgh. 031 552 2901

Thanks to East London, Birmingham, Manchester, Hatfield, Swansea, Southend, South East London, South Shields CUs for material. Photos from Morning Star & Bernie.

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National Federation

This is simply a network of all those Unions that have affiliated together. In order to affiliate, a Claimants Union must be bona-fide, support the four points of the Charter and hold regular weekly meetings that are open to all claimants. The aim of the NFCU is to communicate and co-ordinate activities between Claimants Unions. It holds quarterly national conferences where practice and policy is discussed and decisions are made.

Regional

Organization

To help communication and co-ordination, the Claimants Union movement has a regional structure; Britain being divided into nine regions. The aim is for each region to hold a meeting at least once between national conferences. These meetings choose a Regional Co-ordinating Union which is responsible for the distribution and collection of new information in that region. Each co-ordinating Union has copies of all national federation literature. It also keeps up-to-date address list of Claimants Unions, their phone numbers, and place, day and time of their weekly meetings. People wanting to start new claimants Unions should get in touch with their regional co-ordinating union for support. Duplicating facilities, printing and transport needs can all be co-ordinated in this way. It has been agreed that each CU should pay towards the postage costs incurred by these co-ordinating Unions at about 50p a month. The co-ordinating Unions also provide literature to people not in the movement and to bookshops, etc.